



THE STARKE BARN NEAR RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA  
S. Argus Printing Co.'s Series

*Note from the above  
postcard mailed in 1908  
from Red Cloud to Cuba,  
Illinois:*

*"This is a barn on a large cattle ranch which we pass in coming to Red Cloud on the train. The weather today is hotter than usual. We had a very hard electrical storm last night. The Chautauqua is far better here than Canton's. Read Mother's letter for a very dry short description of it."-Lilla*

## Septemberfest!

Each fall join us for a full day of outdoor cooking, butter churning, cider pressing, old-time farming demonstrations and machinery displays at the Starke Round Barn Historic Site. Other special events will be held throughout the year. Don't miss out on all the fun! Details will be available soon at a new website at: [redcloudguiderocknebraska.com](http://redcloudguiderocknebraska.com). For more information call 402-746-2754, or email [lrasser@gmail.com](mailto:lrasser@gmail.com)



Starke Rasser Reunion circa 1913

## Can you help us?

Efforts are underway to preserve and restore this historic barn. Our first concern is to replace the roof and repair the windows. Any support from the public is greatly appreciated, and assists us in our efforts to obtain grants. Donations may be sent to:

Starke Round Barn Restoration Project  
Peoples Webster County Bank  
126<sup>th</sup> West 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Red Cloud, Ne, 68970

From the junction of US Highways 281 and 136 in Red Cloud, NE, go east 4.5 miles and turn right at the BNSF tracks at Amboy.



## Starke Round Barn Historic Site



Funding provided in part by Webster County Visitors Promotion



## Welcome!

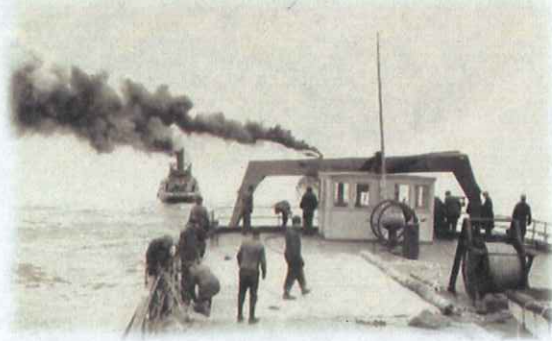
We hope you enjoy your visit.

Please sign our guest book.

Your comments about the barn are encouraged!

## WHEN WAS IT BUILT?

This massive barn was built in 1902-03 by members of the Starke family who were originally from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Conrad Starke Sr. and his wife Veronica made the family fortune with a line of tugboats on the Great Lakes. Veronica's brothers, Gottlieb and Christian Rasser, traveled from Milwaukee to the Republican Valley east of Red Cloud, where they homesteaded in 1870 after serving in the Civil War with the Grand Army of the Republic. Gottlieb and Christian then encouraged Conrad to purchase land adjacent to their homesteads. The Starke family visited Webster County as early as 1885. Sometime after the death of Conrad Sr. in 1896, the tugboat line was liquidated and the proceeds were invested in Starke Farms. Over time, his sons and daughter, Ernest, William, Christopher, Ada, and Conrad Jr., moved to the area.



One of Conrad Starke Sr.'s tugboats on the Great Lakes

## MISFORTUNE STRIKES!

The Starkes tried several different agriculture ventures, unfortunately with limited success. After their livestock feeding operations failed, they turned to dairy farming and converted the basement of the barn for that purpose. But misfortune again struck, this time in the form of tuberculosis in their prizewinning Holstein dairy cows. The herd was quarantined and later had to be destroyed.

Oral history says that the Starkes had a million dollars in capital to invest in this venture. Sadly, less than 25 years after the barn was built, the fortune was gone.



L. to R. Ernest, William, Christopher, Ada, & Conrad Starke Jr.

## THE BARN IS SOLD

In 1930 the Starke Farm was sold on the courthouse steps at foreclosure. At this time the barn and 400 acres were purchased for \$30,000 by Walter and William Rasser, nephews of Veronica Rasser Starke. Since that time the Rasser family has been caretakers of the barn for four generations.

## ABOUT THE BARN

The barn is now over one hundred years old. It stands 65 feet high, is 130 feet in diameter with a center brick silo 28 feet across. The frame of this huge structure is held together by balance and tension rather than nails or pegs. The massive 12" by 12" timbers were shipped by rail from the virgin forests of Wisconsin.

The top level was for hay storage and the track used to hoist the loose hay into the loft from horse-drawn wagons is still in place.

The main level of the barn was for machinery storage, and grain bins were added around the silo later on. The middle section of this floor was used by the teams and wagons that hauled in hay.

The lowest level was for livestock- the southern half for milking and the northern half for horses. Many of the milking stanchions are still in place. The manure trolley and its track that were used to clean the basement of the barn are still in place. Under the concrete drive into the main level are 2 cellars used to store cow beets for feed.



Barn basement after converting to dairy operation.